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THE RELIGION OF THE MOHENJO DARO PEOPLE ACCORDING TO THE INSCRIPTIONS

INTRODUCTION

Sir John Marshall in his work on *Mohenjo Daro and the Indus Civilization* devotes one full chapter to the Religion of that early nation which he describes after interpreting some images, seals, carvings and signs discovered in the cities of Mohenjo Daro and Harappa. Nevertheless, he could not have any certainty about his statements. Everything was guess work, for no written document was deciphered as yet, which would reveal the religious beliefs of those ancient people.

Now after having deciphered above one thousand and eight hundred inscriptions of those discovered at Mohenjo Daro, Harappa and other sites in Sind and even in Mesopotamia, we are able to outline the main tenets of their faith with great certainty and sometimes with a richness of details which could never be expected from those short epigraphs.

To communicate this to the scholarly world, anxious to know the contents of these inscriptions, is the purpose of this paper.[1].

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1. In an article on *Light on the Mohenjo Daro Riddle*, contributed to the *New Review*, July, 1936, pp. 1-16, I advanced some interesting points in connection with the decipherment of these inscriptions, a work in which I am engaged since September, 1935. It is not my purpose to disclose the philological basis of my decipherment at present. This will be done at length in my work on *The Proto-Indian Script and Civilization*, which I hope to publish shortly.

M. S. Meena

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I

THE SUPREME BEING

In the course of my decipherment I found several inscriptions with the sign which is evidently a man. Accordingly it was read *āḷ* which is the word for man in Dravidian languages. Yet as the work was going on a few inscriptions were found in which *āḷ*, "man", was apparently not the proper value of that sign. This disappointment led me to examine the corresponding signs more carefully and minutely, and this study revealed to me a slight but clear difference between two kinds of signs, which were all valued *āḷ* in my first attempt. This difference consists in the fact that while one sign has the arms and legs boldly separated from the trunk as if the person were in an exultant mood, thus ; the other sign has its limbs falling limply along the body, giving the impression of a lifeless body, thus: . If the former is compared with the rococo sculptures of the 18th century, the latter may be compared with the Gothic statues of the 12th and 13th centuries. Then carefully revising the contents of the inscriptions themselves, I finally came to the conclusion that means "man", while stands for a being superior to man, *viz.*, god. But since in these inscriptions there is already a sign for god, *viz.* *kaḍavuḷ* (with four arms) which seems to be a generic name, it follows that our sign must signify the supreme god. What would be the proper phonetic value of this sign then? That was a difficult

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point, for the Dravidians at present do not seem to remember any ancient name given to the supreme God.

First of all, it is to be noticed that among the signs of the Mohenjo Daro script there are families of signs, within which families, as all the signs have a similar appearance, so also their phonetic value varies very little by the introduction or suppression or change of one consonant or vowel sound.[1] Now these two signs and , being so similar as to be easily confused as explained above, must belong to the same family and therefore one reading *āḷ*, the other must also read in a similar way.

This being presupposed I studied the main characteristics or attributes of this supreme God according to the inscriptions in order to find a word which would be both full of meaning and descriptive. From a number of inscriptions in which this sign was found I picked up two, one of which apparently gives the essential description of God, while the other shows his position in relation with the other beings of the Universe. The former was the following:

This inscription reads as follows: *Iruvan-adu kom mīnanir, i.e.* "the horn playing Mīnas of one who exists".[2] Now since the horn players in religious festivals are, even today, servants of the temple, "one who exists" must be an idea that is only referable to God. *Iruvan* must have been a name of God and indeed God is the only being who really exists, for as the metaphysicians explain he exists by himself, while all the other beings exist by another who is God, *viz.*, they have not in themselves the reason of their existence.[3]

1. Cf. Heras, *Light on the Mohenjo Daro Riddle*, *op. cit.*, p. 13.
2. Marshall, M. D., No. 90.
3. Thus when Moses asked God, after the latter had sent him to Egypt to save his brethren: "If they should say to me: what is his name? What shall I say to them?", God replied to him: "You will tell them: I am who am." (Exod., III, 13-14). Even the phrase *tat-tvam-asi* of the *Chāndogya Upanisad*, which is now interpreted in a pantheistic sense, had apparently no other meaning in the beginning than the meaning of our inscription, that reveals the high idea of God that the people of Mohenjo Daro had. Cf. Johanns, *The Light of the East*, 1923, February, p. 3.

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The other inscription referred to above is as follows :

which reads thus: *Kōil ella kaḍavuḷ-aḍu* ... (the dots at the end of the inscription mark the word corresponding to the sign which we are now studying), *i. e.* "The supreme God of all the Gods of the temple".[1] This epigraph shows that in reality this sign refers to a Being which is superior to all the other gods and consequently above the whole Universe.

The name, therefore, of this Supreme God must be one revealing these two ideas : *superiority and self-subsistance.* In all the Dravidian dictionaries there is only one word that would embody them, and this word is *āṇ*, which might be properly translated "Supreme Being". This word, besides, complies with the other requirements spoken of above, *viz.*, to be similar to *āḷ* ; and at the same time *an* being the male termination of nouns, suggests the male shape which is given to God in the images and in the inscriptions.[2]

Now the Supreme Being above everything is the Lord of the whole Universe, and, therefore, everything may be referred to him with a relation of possession. Thus the inscriptions tell us :

1. "The Supreme Being of all the gods of the fields that makes peace.[3]
2. "The Supreme Being of the successful dark growing moon".[4]
3. "The Supreme Being of the rain clouds of the Fish".[5]
4. "The Supreme Being of the clouds of man".[6]
5. "The Supreme Being of the Mīnas".[7]
6. "The Supreme Being of the Mīnas who have the sun on high".[8]

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1. Photo, M. D., 1928-29, No. 4741.
2. The present writer is of opinion that these Proto-Indian people, migrating westwards in a later period, settled in Southern Mesopotamia and became the Sumerians, a contention which will be proved at length in the work mentioned above. Now the Supreme God of the Sumerians in the pre-historic times is *Aṇ*.
3. Marshall, M. D., No. 72.
4. Photo, M. D., 1928-29, No. 4671.
5. Marshall, M. D., No. 295.
6. *Ibid.*, M. D., Pl. CXVI, No. 7.
7. *Ibid.*, H., No. 234.
8. *Ibid.*, M. D. No. 109. It appears that the Mīnas—in Samskṛta literature called Matsyas—formed the main bulk of the people of Mohenjo Daro city.

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II

THE ATTRIBUTES OF THE SUPREME BEING

The attributes of the Supreme Being, which will communicate to us a clearer understanding of its essence, may be divided into two groups :

A. QUIESCENT ATTRIBUTES

1. *Life :* God being the only self-subsistent is the source of life and activity. Thus in an inscription he is called : "The Supreme Being of Life".[1] The word *vāl*, may mean life and happiness, perhaps because originally life and happiness were synonymous, which is still true in the case of God.

2. *Oneness :* He does not communicate his superiority to any one. He is the only One. Thus an inscription runs as follows : *Orvan tirpu tirpu irkra Mīn naṇḍil ṣḷavam*, *i.e.* "Mīna, the farmer of the Crab, about whom *the one* has decreed."[2] As we shall see later "the farmer of the Crab" is a royal title. Therefore no other but the Supreme Being, *the one*, could decree anything about him.

3. *Greatness :* This attribute means that in God there is no limit. Thus we read in an inscription : "Of the very great one".[3]

B. OPERATIVE ATTRIBUTES

4. *Omniscience :* Two inscriptions speak of the God of the city of Nālūr under the name of *Viḍukan*.[4] Now this name properly means "open eye" and refers to a person who has always the eyes open, who sees and knows everything. This very ancient idea agrees with the modern common belief of Hinduism that the gods have no eye-lids. Thus unable to close their eyes, they see everything.[5]

5. *Benevolence :* According to this attribute, the Supreme Being helps men in their needs. A very important inscription

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1. Marshall, M. D., No. 347.
2. *Ibid.*, M. D., No. 180.
3. *Ibid.*, H., No. 21.
4. *Ibid.*, H. No. 329 ; H., No. 329.§
5. Though these two inscriptions refer to the individual god of one place, Nālūr, the nature of the name itself shows that it reveals an attribute of the Supreme Being.

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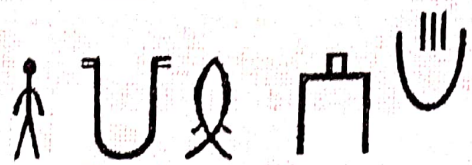
reveals to us the belief the Mohenjo Daro people had regarding this point. The inscription runs thus:



Which reads: *udavu ir Mīn-adu Āṇ, i.e.* "the Supreme Being of Mīna being help."[1] The figure carved on the seal that bears this inscription enhances the value of this epigraph. It represents the skin of a unicorn spread in four directions. Now the unicorn is the *totem* of one of the ancient tribes; it is the most common *totem* among the *totems* shown on the Mohenjo Daro inscriptions. Yet skinning this animal supposes its being killed and the representation of its skin as a trophy discloses the fact that the tribe whose *totem* it was, was defeated by Mīna, but the latter in the inscription attributes the victory to *Āṇ*.

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6. *Power of Destruction and Generation:* Another seal, that has been very often reproduced, represents a nude, three faced god, seated in a sort of a *yōga* pose wearing a trident-like headgear. Round this figure several animals are placed. It has been said that this is a figure or Paśupati.[2] The carver of this seal had not the intention of carving the representation of Śiva as Paśupati.[3] He wanted to represent the Supreme Being surrounded by the *totems* of the different tribes that inhabited Mohenjo Daro. The inscription which appears on the upper portion of the seal refers to two very characteristic functions of the same Supreme Being:

This epigraph reads as follows: *Āṇ naṇḍ valkei kuḍa mīnadu* That means: "The Supreme Being enfeebling and strengthening is of the (months of the) Jar and the Fish."[4] These months were the two months of autumn[5], during which the whole of nature seems to weaken and die: leaves fall from the trees, mountains and fields disappear under a coat of snow, cold stiffens the limbs of

1. Photo, M. D., 1928-29, No. 7597.
2. Mackay, *The Indus Civilization*, p. 70.
3. We readily admit that perhaps this and similar representations gave rise to the idea of the Paśupati.
4. Marshall, M. D., No. 361.
5. The Proto-Indians, as the Mohenjo Daro inscriptions reveal, had eight constellations in their Zodiac. Each month was of 45 days.

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the body. But how useful is this for restoring strength and health to both vegetables and animals. From that sort of lethargic sleep nature rises again more vigorous than ever. This enfeebling and strengthening was directly attributed by the Proto-Indians to the Supreme Being. He is elsewhere often called "the God of the chariot and of the cultivated fields,"[1] two symbols of destruction and fertility, which finally reveal *Āṇ* as the fore-runner of the modern Śiva.

III

HIS FORMS

Āṇ is supposed to be the highest God, the god of heaven, in fact he is, as we shall see later on, identified with the Sun. Now the sun in the course of the year travels through the constellations of the Zodiac, which were called houses. Accordingly each month the sun being in a different house was supposed to take a different form, and since the constellations of the Proto-Indians, as said above, were, only eight, the forms of the Sun, *i.e.* the Supreme Being, were eight. One of the inscriptions keeps a record of this number in a sort of a riddle-like mathematical equation:

The inscription reads as follows: *Eṇmai irkŋa Mīn vēl eṭṭirkŋa īr adu, i.e.* "Eṇmai is to the fish and to the acacia what eight is to two."[2] This equation may be mathematically expressed thus:

$$\frac{x}{\text{fish}+\text{acacia}}=\frac{8}{2}$$

from which we realize that x representing *Eṇmai*, must be also 8. And indeed *Eṇmai* is till now a modern name of Śiva meaning "eight-bodied or formed". There cannot be any doubt that in those early days this name was only attributed to the Supreme Being.

Another inscription simply tells us that He is eight: "The two Fishes (constellation) of that which is eight and who has the sun on high."[3]

Accordingly the eight forms of the Supreme Being were the eight constellations which were the following :

1. Marshall, M. D., No. 37.
2. Ibid., M. D., No. 42.
3. Marshall, M. D., No. 114.

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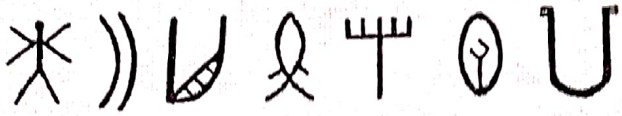
The Ram, the Harp, the Crab the Mother, the Scale, the Arrow, the Jar and the Fish or the two Fishes.[1]

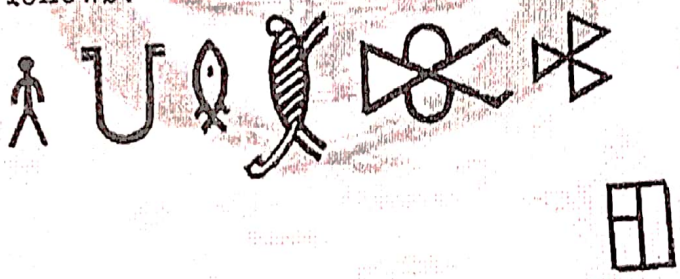
Images of this Supreme Being under these forms were worshipped in different parts of the country. Thus an inscription says: "Of the god of one side (form) who is in the country."[2]

The most popular of all these forms of God seems to have been the Fish. Several inscriptions refer to this:



Which reads: *Adu tali pēr mīn oriḍa eṭṭu kaḍavuḷ, i.e.*, "That (is) the eight (formed) god, whose one side (form) is the sprinkled great Fish".[3] Another inscription says: "The Supreme Being of the Fish God (is) in front."[4] Yet another: "The two fishes who are in the house (temple) of the very great Ram are (forms) of god who is outside (beyond) the country".[5]

Occasionally, two forms of the Supreme Being were combined in the same image. Thus an inscription reads: "Of the great who is two in one who has the sun on high."[6] We have a particular case of combination in the God of Naṇḍūr.[7] The inscription that referes to it runs as follows:



It reads: "*Nila Naṇḍūr āḍu mīn-aḍu Āṉ val*, which means: "The Supreme Being of the Ram and the Fish of Naṇḍūr that has lands is happy."[8] Accordingly the God of Naṇḍūr was a combination of the Ram and the Fish. This combination is represented in the seal itself: an enormous ram, much larger than

1. Some inscriptions refer to one Fish in the constellation, others, nevertheless, refer to two.
2. Marshall, H., No. 87.
3. *Ibid.*, M. D., No. 419.
4. *Ibid.*, M. D., No. 214.
5. Photo, M. D., 1928-29, No. 6380.
6. *Photo*, M. D., 1928-29, No. 6792.
7. Naṇḍūr in all probability was the name of the ancient city which we know by the name Mohenjo Daro, at present.
8. *A. S. I. Report*, 1928-29, Pl. XXVIII, No. *g*.

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the human figures represented in it, having the head of a fish and bearing the horns over the fish's head. Yet the seal itself seems to show that this is only *a form* of god—a symbol, a representation—for on the other side of the seal the figure of god is represented standing in the middle of a tree, with the trident on his head, after the fashion of the other seal. Before him a devotee half-squatting on the ground offers his prayers to the deity.

IV

THE SUPREME BEING IS THREE-EYED

This is the idea about Śiva in modern Hinduism, which we find clearly expressed with reference to God in the inscriptions of the Proto-Indians; and the idea was so well known that the only mention of "his three eyes"[1], as we find in two inscriptions, revealed to those people the idea of the Supreme Being. These three eyes were being worshipped. "The worshipped three eyes on which the four stars rise."[2] Accordingly god is called the three-eyed one. Thus the following inscription:

Which reads: *Parava nila ir mīnanir avana mūn kaṇ, i.e.* "The three-eyed, he of the Mīnas who are moon Paravas."[3] In another inscription it is said that "the twelve stars of the Spring Fish that have the Sun on high (are) the three-eyed one."[4]

In this inscription some connection between the "three-eyed one" and the constellation of the Fish is being disclosed; but in the other inscriptions it is clearly stated that the Fish is also the "three-eyed one". Thus:

1. "The three-eyes of the Great Fish".[5]
2. "The three-eyes of he of the Spring".[6]

1. Marshall, H., No. 379.
2. Photo, M.D., 1928-29, No. 7708.
3. Marshall, M.D., No, 8
4. *Ibid.*, M.D., No. 111
5. *Ibid.*, M.D., No. 68.
6. Photo, M.D., 1928-29, No. 6531. "He of the Spring" is the Fish who is often called "Spring Fish" (Marshall M.D., No. 111; Photo, M.D., 1929-30, No. 8222; Marshall, M.D., No. 401; *Ibid.*, H., No. 89) as the symbol of the fertility of God, which is specially seen in Spring.

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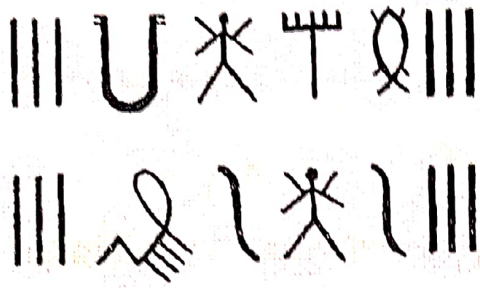
Yet another inscription avers that "in the house the Great Fish meditates on the three-eyed one".[1]

The subject is even expressed in two verses carved on two planes of a prism. These verses run thus :



Which reads : *Mūn mīn pēr kaḍavuḷ aḍu mūn*
Mūn ār kaḍavuḷ ār kārumugiḷ mūn

This means :

"The three stars are the three (eyes) of the great God"
"The three streams of the stream-God are the three rain clouds"[2]

Two inscriptions refer to one eye only :

that is : *orkan*, "one eye".[3] Such inscriptions evidently refer to the third eye which grew at a later period, according to late Śaivite tradition when the god realized that two eyes were not enough to see everything. Accordingly one inscription speaks "of the growth of the eye",[4] and consistent with the idea that the fish is three eyed, another inscription refers to the "eye in the Fish",[5] *viz.* the third eye.

V

THE SUPREME BEING IS FISH-EYED

This quality which is considered as a beauty note in Indian aesthetics, is also attributed to the Supreme Being in the

1. Marshall, M.D., No. 94.
2. *Ibid.*, M.D., Pl. CXV, No. 16.
3. *Ibid.*, H., No. 3278.
4. *Ibid.*, H., No. 208.
5. *Ibid.*, H., No. 53.

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Mohenjo Daro inscriptions: This inscription which reads: *Mīn kaṇ, i.e.* "fish-eye" or "fish-eyed"[1], is often met with. Occasionally in order to avoid any doubt the inscription runs: *Pēr mīn kaṇ, i.e.* "the great fish-eyed".[2] And naturally, since this fish-eyed is the same three-eyed spoken of before, an inscription combines both qualities when saying: *mūn mīn kaṇ*, "three fish eyes".[3]

VI

THE NAMES OF THE SUPREME BEING

We have accidentally noted above that *Iruvan* "the one who is", seems to be one of the names given to God in those early days.

Another name which has also been mentioned before is *Eṇmai*, a name which is still given to Śiva among the Dravidian nations of South India. Similarly, *viḍukaṇ*, also referred to above, is used now-a-days in the South.

A new name of God is contained in the following brief inscription: Which reads *Pērāṇor nālvīḍ, i.e.* "four houses (or "a number of houses") of those belonging to Pērāṇ".[4] These seem to be the temple servants where Pērāṇ was worshipped. Pērāṇ or Perumāḷ is a very common name of Śiva in Southern India. Accordingly another inscription calls god "Pērāṇ of the chariot and of the cultivated fields."[5]

A fifth name of God is contained in this brief epigraph: This reads: *Tāṇḍavan ir nāl maram, i.e.* "The Tāṇḍavan is in the four trees", *i.e.* in the forest.[6] Tāṇḍavan is the name of the dancing Śiva. This shows that the idea of God dancing as the source of all the movement of the universe is a very old one.

1. *Ibid*, M.D., No. 261; *Ibid.*, M.D., No. 254, etc.
2. *Ibid.*, H., No. 257.
3. *Ibid.*, M.D., No. 365.
4. Photo, M.D., 1928-29, No. 6379.
5. Marshall, M.D., No. 37.
6. *Ibid.*, No. 449.

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VII

THE SUN

We have pointed out above that the Supreme Being was identified with the Sun, he being the God of heaven. Yet the Sun was actually worshipped in the temples as is clearly seen in a small oblong object in which the inscription is accompanied by a carving that represents a temple of the sun.

In front of the temple there is a throne over which there is the disc of the sun as if he were a king, for the throne is a symbol of royalty. To the right an inscription reminds us that the temple "is of the high sun", *uyarel uyarel adu*,[1] the word 'high sun' being repeated twice as token of respect and veneration. In front of the temple there is also the sign of Āṇ to show that he is the same as the sun. This identification is expressed in a number of epigraphs, for instance in the following :

1. "Pērāṇ of the chariot and the cultivated fields is the Sun on high."[2]
2. "Of the Great God who is the Sun on high".

Due to this identification, since god is *viḍukan* omniscient, the sun is also supposed to see everything. On the obverse of a small coin-like object there is an emblem which is often found in the punch marked coins of a much later period. This emblem is shown thus : The central circle represents the sun. All round the sun there are arrows which read *kaṇ*, "eye". This sign therefore may be read : *el ellā kāṇ i.e.*, "the sun sees everything".[4]

Since the sun was seen rising from the East and after describing an arc over the sky setting in the West, they imagined that the sun was driving a vehicle which once is called a wagon, and other times a chariot. Thus we read in some inscriptions :

1. "Of the wagon of him who is the high sun".[5]

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1. *A. S. I. Report*, 1929-30, Pl. XXVIII. No. 11466 (H). Cf. Marshall, M.D., No. 490.
2. Marshall, M.D., No. 37.
3. *Ibid.*, M.D., No. 318.
4. *A. S. I. Report*, 1928-29, Pl. XXXII, No. 1*a* and *b*.
5. *J. R. A. S.*, 1912, pp. 699-700.

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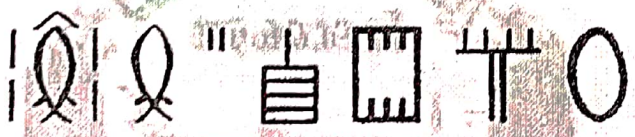
2. "That stone-chariot of the great God".[1]
3. "Whatsoever is of the stone chariot is of the very great one".[2]

It is interesting to note that they imagined that the chariot of the sun was of stone, not of any precious metal.

VIII

THE LIṄGA

That the *phallus* was worshipped in Mohenjo Daro is proved clearly by a number of such stones discovered there and at Harappa. Yet while going through the inscriptions one realizes that its cult was not spread regularly amongst all classes of people. It is true that the *liṅga* is also identified with the high Sun as in this inscription: "The lustrous *liṅga* is the high sun".[3] But it is not less true that the Mīnas—afterwards called the Matsyas—who seem to form the main bulk of the Mohenjo Daro inhabitants, disliked the *liṅga* worship. One of the inscriptions runs as follows:



This inscription reads: *Ūr nalam ḍug cuṇṇi irkra mīn mīnanir i. e.* "The prosperity of the land is of the Mīnas of the Fish who have the despised *liṅga*".[4] Another inscription informs us who were especially those who despised the *liṅga*, "the canal (which is) in front of the...houses of the land of the *liṅga* (which is) despised by the thinkers of the land".[5] According to the information supplied by this inscription, the high classes of the country, the *intelligentia* of the land, despised this cult. Only poor and ignorant people adhered to it. Yet it seems that the introduction of this cult among the Mīnas was the work of one of their kings. The following inscription speaks of him:

which reads: *Cuṇṇi sere taltalāḷva* and means: "The imprisoned

1. Marshall, M.D., Pl. CXVI, No. 30.
2. *Ibid.*, M.D., No. 234.
3. *Ibid.*, H., No. 45. Cf. *Ibid.*, M.D., Pl. XVI., No. 337; *Ibid.* H. No. 99. etc.
4. Marshall, H., No. 41.
5. *Ibid.*, M. D., No. 389.

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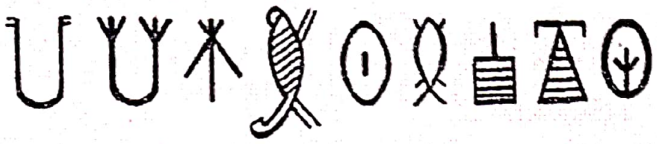
illustrious ruler of the *liṅga*".[1] Another inscription gives more details about this ruler:



This inscription reads as follows: *Sere kon Cuṇṇi Mīn pagal āḍu koḍi tenāḍu, i.e.*, "The imprisoned king Cuṇṇi Mīna, the day when the Ram begins in the country of the South."[2] It seems therefore that this king's devotion to the *liṅga* was so much as to inspire him to take the name of the *liṅga* as his own name. In fact another inscription, undoubtedly referring to the same person, tells us that "his *liṅga* is the high sun".[3]

The Mīnas apparently could not tolerate this new cult and the king seems to have been deposed and imprisoned by a popular rising. So an inscription says: "(The object of) the hostility of the Mīnas is the imprisoned illustrious ruler (who is) a priest."[4] To the same deposition of this king must refer another short inscription that announces: "The end of the power of Mīna".[5] How this king died is not clear in the Mohenjo Daro epigraphs. One says only: "Of the death of Mīna".[6] But an inscription carved after his death seems to commemorate the bitter feelings of the Mīnas towards their old king in a sarcastic way. The inscription runs as follows:

The inscription reads: *Vīṭṭil irkra Mīn eṭṭirkra ellā kaḍāvuḷ-adu kaval kālkalakūr maram*, and means, "The tree of the canalized united countries of the Kavals of (dedicated to) all the gods, whom Mīna who was in the house has reached".[7] The inscription primarily speaks of the Kaval countries which were dedicated to all their gods. This idea seems to have brought to the memory of the composer of the inscription the recollection of king Cuṇṇi Mīna who was fond at least of one of the gods of

1. *Ibid.*, M. D., No. 132.
2. *Ibid.*, M. D., No. 49.
3. *Ibid.*, M. D, No. 463.
4. *Illustrated London News*, 4-10-24.
5. Marshall, H. No. 153.
6. *Ibid.*, H., No. 127.
7. *Ibid.*, M.D., No. 11.

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Kavals, the *liṅga*, as we shall see later. In a moment of sarcastic wit, he declared that the unfortunate king had already reached those gods who were despised by him and his nation.

What was therefore the origin of this cult? While studying these inscriptions we find the *liṅga* cult established as at home among the two tribes, the Bilavas and the Kavals. (The Bilavas are the Bhills; the Kavals are the robber caste of the North and the South). About the Bilavas the inscriptions say:

1. "In the dark growing half of the moon, when the sun was on high, the Bilavas pulled down the four houses of the *liṅga*."[1]

   (According to this inscription the *liṅga* among the Bilavas had houses the rent of which was used for fostering its cult.)

2. "The *liṅga* of the eight villages of the Veḷvēl Bilavas (is) the high sun of the harvest".[2] (Veḷvēl Bilavas were a section of the Bilavas)

About the Kavals we find:

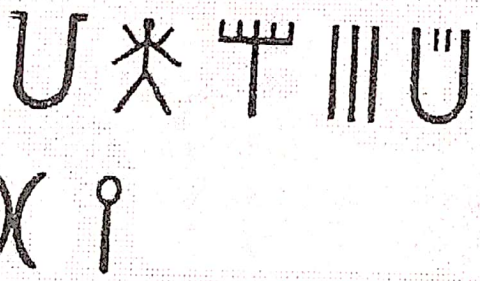
"The old *liṅga* of the Kavals".[3]

From these premises we may perhaps deduce the consequence that these two tribes were Kolerian and that they brought this cult from the far-off Eastern Islands.

IX

A DIVINE TRIAD

Among the Mohenjo Daro inscriptions there is one of extraordinary importance, on account of its unexpected revelations in the field of the history of comparative religions and even in the general field of ancient civilization. The inscription runs as follows:



It reads[4]: *uḍa mūn pēr kaḍavuḷ-aḍu kalak air;* that means, "The joined life of the united three great gods".[5]

1. *Ibid.*, M.D., No. 406.
2. Marshall, H., No. 99.
3. *Ibid.*, H., No. 118.
4. The second line of the inscription always reads from left to right.
5. Marshall, M.D., No. 209.

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First of all we must determine who were these three great gods. Were they *Āṇ*, the Sun and the *Liṅga*? They could not be so: first because the *liṅga* was not generally accepted by the Mīnas and even perhaps we may add by all the so-called Dravidians. Besides Āṇ and the Sun are not two gods, but one, for they are identified not in a passing way, but essentially. These three gods may therefore be Āṇ and two more.

A similar triad of gods is also found in Sumerian inscriptions and the three gods of Sumer in pre-historic times were *Āṇ*, *Ama* and *Enlil*. *Āṇ* was the father, *Ama* was the mother and *Enlil* was the son, who afterwards in historic Sumerian times became the father.[1] I suspect that the Proto-Dravidian triad must be similar to this. In fact *Āṇ*, the father of Sumer, is the same *Āṇ*, the Supreme Being of India.[2] The mother is called *Ama* in Sumerian. Now *Amma* is the common word for mother in Dravidian languages and a good number of clay statuettes of the mother goddess have been found in Mohenjo Daro and in Harappa. In the inscriptions the mother goddess is found among the constellations of the Zodiac (She afterwards was called the Virgin). Her representation is thus: It should be read *amma*, *i. e.* "the mother".[3] If we compare this pictograph with some of the images of Mohenjo Daro, we shall find complete resemblance between the two headgears.[4] Such an idea of the mother goddess must be the first foundation of the Śakta sect of India. I must add here that this *mother* received a name which is the female denomination corresponding to the denomination *mīṅkaṇ* attributed to Āṇ. In an inscription she is called *Mīṅkaṇṇi*.[5] This in fact had to be the original name of the goddess of Madura, Mīnākṣi, whose name now is partly Dravidian-Mīna-and partly Samskṛta-akṣi.

The counterpart of the son, Enlil, is not found in the inscriptions as yet. Perhaps he will be found among the 800 more inscriptions which are still awaiting interpretation.

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1. Radau, *Sumerian Hymns and Prayers to God Nin-ib*, pp. 4–7.
2. The Koṅkaṇi speaking people call their father *Āṇ* and *Amma*, their mother.
3. Marshall, M.D., No. 182.
4. Cf. Mackay, *The Indus Civilization*, Pl. I, 1.
5. Marshall, M.D., No. 338.

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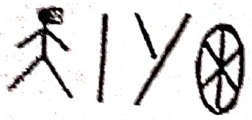
What has been found is the combination of Āṇ and *Amma*.

The inscription is as follows:  It reads: *uyarel iĕr or Ammān*: that is, "one Ammān (not two but one) of the chariot of the sun".[1] This deity half-man (proper left), and half woman (proper right), which is also found in Sumer with the name of *Amaa-a*[2] seems to be the original idea of the Hindu image of *ardhanārīśvara*, which is only found in Śaivism and which has the two parts put in the same relative position.

X

OTHER GODS

While studying these inscriptions we come across numerous references to a number of minor gods who in the course of time were supposed to preside over different places, elements or functions. Thus for instance, while speaking of Āṇ we have found a reference to "all the gods of the fields", from which phrase we may rightly conclude that the gods presiding over the fields were more than one or two. One of these gods of the fields was very likely that mentioned in the following inscription:

This inscription reads: *uyarel ir nilavan kaḍavuḷ-adu*; that means: "Of the God of the living Nilāvan who has the sun on high".[3] This god of *Nilāvan* very likely presided over the lands.

Another god of the fields was undoubtedly the god of rain which is so beneficial to agriculture. This god is often spoken of in the inscriptions, for instance:

Which reads: *ūril irkra mūn kalakūr kārmugil kaḍavuḷ- adu*, *i. e.* "The three united countries which are in the country are of the god of the rain clouds",[4] *viz.* rains fall upon those

1. Marshall, M.D., No. 209.
2. Radau, *op. cit.*, p. 7.
3. Marshall, M.D., No. 405.
4. Photo, M.D., 1928-29, No. 7137.

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three united countries. This god of the rain clouds or of the rains is often mentioned in the inscriptions.[1]

Also the god of thunder is being referred to, but in a descriptive way: "The very great god shaking the height of the clouds who is in the house".[2] To shake the height of the clouds seems to mean "shaking the high clouds".

The god of death is referred to in connection with one of the human sacrifices, of which we shall speak later:

It reads: *Mīn ēḷ sāvu kaḍavuḷ kaṇ īr maram*, *i.e.* "the two trees under which the seven Mīnas saw the god of death."[3] The phrase is equivalent to dying; yet the mention of the god of death is not without interest.

Another brief inscription mentions the god of the netherworld:

It reads: *kīḻ kaḍavuḷadu*, *i.e.*, "of the god of below".[4]

Besides, local and personal gods are often referred to; for instance,

1. "Of the great god of the cave reached by the growing half of the moon".[5]
2. "Of the god of Mīna who is in the country".[6]

Yet it is evident that when referring to all these gods on many occasions the Supreme Being Āṇ is finally in their minds. Thus, besides the god of the main clouds, Āṇ itself is also connected with them.

That reads: *nanna Āṇ nanna kārmugil-adu*, *i.e.*, "The friendly Supreme Being of the approaching rainy clouds".[7] Or,

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1. Marshall, M.D., No. 28; *Ibid.*, M.D., M. 192, etc.
2. *Ibid.*, M.D., Pl. CXVIII, No. 3 (Hr. 4337).
3. *Ibid.*, M.D., No. 494.
4. *Ibid*, H., No. 2.
5. *Ibid.*, M.D., No. 469.
6. *Ibid.*, M.D., No. 137.
7. Photo, M.D., 1928-29, No. 7190.

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another one that speaks of the "shining god of the two fishes that have the sun on high", who cannot be but Āṉ.

Sometimes the trees were specially dedicated to one god or another or to any form of god. Thus the following inscription:

It reads: *Vīḍ velvāge Mīn opad maṟam, i. e.* "the nine trees of (dedicated to) the Fish (are) the *velvāges* of the houses".[1] The inscription only informs us of what kind those trees were *viz. velvāges*, otherwise called white *siris*, which were also used for building houses.

It was a common custom for each city or village to have one of these holy trees which were called "the village tree". Thus:

1. "Of the village tree in the Spring when the sun is high."[2]
   Very likely it refers to a festival.
2. "Of the tree of the village of the Mīnas".[3]

On one occasion the sun and a tree are identified: "One (are) the sun and the tree".[4]

XII

MINOR DEITIES

The *ayanārs* or protective deities of the cities or villages are very common in Southern India. They have their shrines by the road side at the entrance to the villages. It is interesting that the only inscription that mentions these *ayanārs* calls them "road *ayanārs*". Thus: "The road *ayanārs* of the two cities in the spring with the Scale".[5] This epigraph refers to a festival in honour of the *ayanārs*, of those cities. The festival was celebrated at the special time when the spring ends with the scale. For this constellation was the first constellation of summer.

Similarly spirits or devils, belief in whom is also much spread through the South, are mentioned in our epigraphs. For instance, an inscription refers to the "three houses of the devil of the villagers".[6]

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1. *A. S. I., Report.* 1923-24, Pl. XIX, No. 2 (M. D.).
2. Marshall, M. D., No. 430.
3. *Ibid.*, M. D., No. 40.
4. *Ibid.*, M. D., No. 55.
5. *Ibid.*, H., No. 35.
6. *Ibid.*, H., Nos. 242, 252.

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XIII

EMBLEMS OF GOD

The most commonly mentioned emblem of god is the trident. And that this is a symbol of God is definitely settled in an inscription which mentions "the trident in which there is one"[1] a phrase that evidently refers to Āṇ on whose head a trident is always seen.

Many villages seem to have had a trident, perhaps instead of an image, in the local temple. Unless the image itself, having a trident on its head was perhaps denominated trident. Thus :

1. "Three houses of the village trident".[2]
2. "The trident of the village of Mīna in the year *vēlorvēl* (trident of tridents)".[3]
3. "Of the trident of two villages attaining lustre".[4]

Moreover tridents existed in the fields and in boundaries of properties, very likely in small shrines, as is still customary now-a-days. A few specimens :

1. "The trident of the cultivated fields that are in the country".[5]
2. "The trident of the field of the Kavals".[6]
3. "Two tribes of the Mīnas who have boundary tridents".[7]

Tridents in fact were a very common object in the house and everywhere. Some inscriptions only mention a number of tridents without informing us where they were, or what use was being made of them. Thus :

1. "Three tridents".[8]
2. "Three tridents which are in the house".[9]
3. "Four tridents which are in the country"[10] (several tridents).
4. "Six tridents".[11]

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1. *Ibid.*, M. D., No. 7.
2. *Ibid.*, H., No. 56.
3. *Ibid.*, H., No. 73.
4. *Ibid.*, H., No. 34.
5. *Ibid.*, M. D., No. 131.
6. *Ibid.*, M. D., No. 301.
7. *Ibid.*, M. D., No. 48.
8. *Ibid.*, M. D., No. 270; *Ibid.*, M.D., No. 220.
9. *Ibid*, H., No. 310.
10. *Ibid.*, M. D., No. 143.
11. *Ibid.*, M. D., Nos. 243, 249.

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Another emblem of God only once referred to is the *snake*. The snake is one of the most common symbols of Śiva in modern Hinduism. Thus an inscription informs us that "Mina meditates on the snake of the three-eyed one".[1]

Similarly, another inscription mentions the axe which is also often seen in the hands of Śiva; "Whatever is of the axe of the Fish is of the village trident".[2]

XIV

MODES OF WORSHIP

Just as now-a-days, to see an object worthy of veneration was for those ancient people to worship that object. "Men *see* the holy tree"[3], runs an inscription. In the same way thinking or meditating on a sacred being was equivalent to an act of worship. A few specimens of such worship are given below:

1. "Of the great god who is meditated on in the village."[4]
2. "One meditates on the three eyes."[5]
4. "The imprisoned Minas meditate on the three eyes".[6]
4. "When the Fish reaches the Crab meditates on the three eyes."[7] (Worship by a constellation.)
5. "When the sun reaches the top, the Minas think on the three eyes."[8]
6. "The Mina of (devoted to) the Fish, who is in the country, worships the three eyed one."[9]

In the same way sprinkling a sacred object with water, milk or any other object was also considered an act of worship. Thus an epigraph says: "This year the sprinkled great Fish (is) one side of the eight (formed) God."[10]

Another inscription refers to three vows or solemn promises taken by a man: "Mina who took three vows to God is a friend of the united countries of the Minas".[11]

1. *Ibid.*, M. D., No. 251.
2. *Ibid.*, M.D. No. 75.
3. *Ibid.*, M.D., Nos. 410, 428.
4. *Ibid.*, M.D., No. 310.
5. *Ibid.*, M.D., No. 168.
6. *Ibid.*, M.D., No. 147.
7. *Ibid.*, M.D., No. 170.
8. *Ibid.*, M.D., No. 345.
9. *Ibid.*, M.D., No. 326. Cf. *Ibid.*, M.D., No. 429.
10. *Ibid.*, M.D., No. 419.
11. *Ibid.*, M.D., No. 431.

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XV

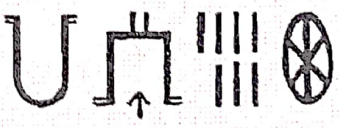
HUMAN SACRIFICES

These very words are never found in the inscriptions. Yet when one observes that the number of deceased persons are always the same or at least repeated in certain proportion, one at once realizes that the inscriptions speak of real human sacrifices, about which besides some other details are given in the inscriptions.

The number of persons sacrificed are seven or twentyone, a multiple of seven. For instance,

1. "Of the seven of the united countries who died in the country."[1]
2. "Of the death of seven of the Mīnas who were in the country of Āṇ (who is) the Sun."[2]
3. "The two trees under which the seven Mīnas saw the god of death."[3]
4. "Of the death of twentyone counted persons who were in the country."[4]
5. "Of the death of twentyone counted Mīnas of outside the country who were in the house."[5]
6. "Of the death of the twentyone counted prisoners in the (month of the) Fish when the growing half of the moon was over the lands."[6]

Only on one occasion the victims sacrificed were not seven not twentyone, but twelve.[7] Another inscription sounds like a sentence of death :



It reads : *uyarel ēḷ sāvu adu, i. e.*, "Let the seven die when the sun is on high."[8] Another seems to be a demand of the god for the sacrifice of seven persons :

1. *Ibid.*, M.D., No. 146.
2. *Ibid.*, M.D., No. 553.
3. *Ibid.*, M.D., Pl. CXVIII, No. 3 (Hr. 4337).
4. *Ibid.*, H. No. 120 ; *Ibid.*, H. No. 12.
5. *Ibid.*, M.D., No. 557.
6. *Ibid.*, H., No. 51.
7. Photo, M.D., 1928-29, No. 6357.
8. Marshall, M.D., No. 344.

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The inscription reads : *Mūnmaleor ēḷ ir adu*, i. e. "the existence of the seven persons of Mūnmale".[1] Those persons who were going to be sacrificed were kept in prison for some time and were supposed to be temple prisoners[2], and at least on one occasion they were kept in a palm grove.[3] The sacrifice was performed under the sacred trees[4], though the actual way of performing it is not described. Two *bandis* took the corpses from the place of the sacrifice to the burning grounds.[5]

XVI

THE TEMPLES

The temple of the sun carved next to the inscription referred to above[6] seems to be small and square, only containing the shrine of the sun. The roofing is flat but in the four corners four spike-like finials break the flat line of the edifice. In front of the temple there was an open porch in front of which a double awning protected the worshippers from the sun and from the rain. At the very end of the porch roof just over the awning, there is another finial of the same type. The carver of this design has placed the object of worship in the temple in the porch, so that it could be fully seen. It is the disc of the sun here placed over a throne as if meaning that the sun was the Supreme Ruler of the Universe.

Other temples were perhaps larger. They were generally built in the centre of the town towards which all the main streets converged, as the pictograph of a temple representing the usual plan shows :

The temples had servants[7], amongst whom there were the temple guards.[8]

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1. *Ibid.*, M.D., No. 113.
2. *Ibid.*, M.D., Pl. CXVI, No. 6.
3. Photo, M.D., 1928-29, No. 6628.
4. *Marshall*, M.D., Pl. CXVIII, No. 3 (Hr. 4337).
5. *Ibid.*, H., No. 11.
6. *A. S. I. Report*, 1929-30, Pl. XXVIII, No. 11466 (8).
7. Photo, M.D., 1928-29, No. 7135.
8. Photo, M.D., 1928-29, No. 6389.

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The temples enjoyed properties for the maintenance of the cult. These properties generally were houses or land, and are spoken of as belonging to the gods themselves. For instance,

1. "Four houses of the fish eyed one."[1]
2. "In the dark growing half of the moon when the sun is on high, the Bilavas pulled down the four houses of the *liṅga*."[2]
3. "Of the palm grove of the *liṅga*".[3]
4. "The Supreme Being of the Ram and the Fish of Naṇḍūr that has lands is happy".[4]
5. "Of the one palm grove of the Great Fish, outside the country of the prisoner."[5]

Taxes, and tributes were also fixed for the benefit of the temples. For instance,

1. "The Mīna of the tax on fish of the high sun–*liṅga*."[6]
2. "One share of the Supreme Being (who is) the high sun is flax."[7]

Some private houses were apparently having small shrines attached to them. An inscription runs thus: "In eight houses (there are) six trident temples."[8]

XVII

THEOCRATICAL GOVERNMENT AND PRIESTHOOD

The Government of Mohenjo Daro was theocratical. God was supposed to be the king of the country. The king was only an administrator on behalf of God and he received the title of "the farmer", and since Mohenjo Daro was called "Naṇḍūr", "the city of the Crab", the complete title of the king was *Naṇḍ uḷavan* or *Naṇḍil uḷavan*, *i.e.* the Farmer of the Crab.

1. "Mīna, farmer of the Crab, who is in the house."[9]
2. "The shining farmer of the Crab who is in the country."[10]

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1. *A. S. I., Report*, 1928-29, Pl. XXXII, Nos. 1*a* and *b*.
2. Marshall, M.D., No. 406.
3. *Ibid*, M.D., No. 488.
4. *A. S. I. Report*, 1928-29, Pl. XXVIII, No. *g*.
5. Photo, M.D., 1929-30, No. 8024.
6. Marshall, H., No. 33.
7. Photo, M.D., 1928-29, No. 6390.
8. Marshall, M.D., No. 227.
9. *Ibid.*, M.D., No. 158.
10. *Ibid.*, H. No. 67.

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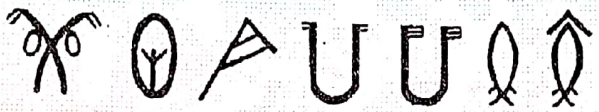
3. "The Mīna outside the country (is) the farmer of the Crab, the Mīna of the two united countries."[1]

Another inscription removes all doubts as regards the Crab, which is the constellation: "The farmer of the Crab in which the sun is".[2] Finally another one clearly establishes who is the Lord of the farmer while adding: "The farmer of the Crab of Āṇ."[3]

The king having this sacred authority as a minister of God is also naturally entrusted with the office of priest, a dual dignity which is stated in the following inscription:



The inscription reads: *Mīnanir māru adu ayyan sere tallalāḻva i.e.*, "(the object of) the hostility of the Mīnas is the imprisoned illustrious ruler (who is a) priest".[4]

XVIII

RELIGIOUS FESTIVALS

There are a number of feasts which apparently have no religious significance, for instance the *Naṇḍal*, at present called *Poṇgal*[5], which seems to be at least originally of a purely social character.

Other feasts are only briefly enunciated in a way which would be quite clear for all of them, but which is somewhat puzzling to the epigraphist who tries to unravel the mysteries of the inscriptions seventy centuries after. Their system is similar to ours if we would speak of the feast of Ganga celebrated after the monsoon saying, "On full moon day, Ganga of the abundant waters". Thus run some of the inscription:

1. "When the growing half of the moon reached the (new) year, the three Fish eyes."[6]
2. "The Supreme Being of the Fish and death on full moon day."[7]

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1. *Ibid.*, M.D., Pl. XVIII, No. 8 (H. 1051). Cf. *Ibid.*, M.D., Nos. 447, 350, 238, 269, *Ibid.*, H., Nos. 38, 147.
2. Marshall, M.D., No. 559.
3. Photo, M.D., 1928-9, No. 5678.
4. *Illustrated London News*, 4-10-24.
5. The word *Nandal* is used now only in connection with boiled rice eaten during the *Pongal* feast. The Mohenjo Daro inscriptions speak of the *Nandal* only, as if they were calling the feast by this name.
6. Marshall, M.D., No. 41.
7. *J. R. A. S.*, 1912, pp. 699-700.

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Other inscriptions are a little more explicit.

1. "The rain clouds of the approaching thunder sounding Scale are the great god, who is (celebrated) during the twelve suns in the high days every eight year outside the country of Orūr."[1]
2. "That trident of the country this year is the trident of the village."[2]

According to this inscription it appears that a trident, or perhaps an image having a trident on its head, was transferred from village to village in the country and remained in each village for a year. The stay of the image or trident in the village was undoubtedly marked with special festivals.

XIX

DEATH AND JUDGMENT

For the Mohenjo Daro people to die was the beginning of a new existence. All the phrases used in the inscriptions clearly show that the soul continued living after the body was committed to the earth or cremated—for these were the two ways of disposing of the dead.[3] Some specimens are given herewith :

1. "Five houses of two persons reaching the Sun."[4]
2. "The great king four years (ago)...has reached the sun."[5]
3. "Of the seven houses of the head man who is gone to the sky."[6]
4. "Mīna is in the very great god."[7]
5. "The farmer of the Carb reaching the Crab."[8]

As was customary in Sumer, in Mohenjo Daro also kings

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1. Marshall, M.D., Pl. CXVI, No. 23.
2. Photo, M.D., 1928-29, No. 5924.
3. Marshall, H., No. 11 ; *Ibid.*, M.D., No. 99.
4. *Ibid.*, H., No. 210.
5. *Ibid.*, M. D., No. 278.
6. *Ibid.*, M. D., No. 118.
7. *Ibid.*, M. D., 5554. The sign that stands for Mīna in this inscription is never used meaning the constellation of the Fish. It is the proper name of a man.
8. Photo, 1929-30, M.D., No. 8333.

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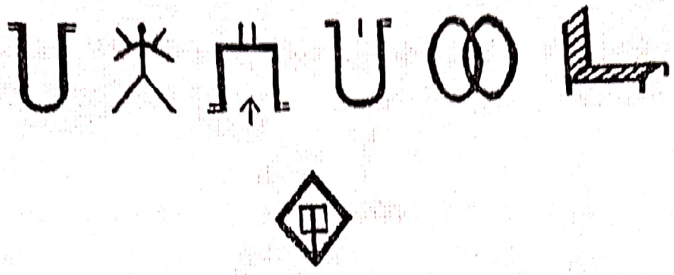
when dying were being deified. Thus runs an inscription :



It reads: *Ko kalakūr āṇḍu sāvu kaḍavuḷ-adu kallare.* That means: "Tomb of the dead god of the year, the lord of the united countries."[1]

All this phraseology cannot be explained on the supposition of the ideas of the transmigration of souls or of rebirths. Yet one inscription hints at this latter idea. The fact that it is one only shows that the idea was not much spread, and on this account the inscription is of extra-ordinary importantce :

It reads : *Ēḷ sāvu āḷ eṭṭuḍay-adu, i.e.* "Of the eight dresses of the man who died seven times".[2] It seems therefore that the maximum of rebirths a man could expect was eight a number considered sacred on account of the eight forms of Āṇ. According to this the man whose death is recorded in the inscription might have another birth only, for he was supposed to have died seven times.

The belief of judgment after death seems to. have existed among the people of Mohenjo Daro as the following two inscriptions show :

1. "The very great Fish is the justice of all men."[3]
2. "The Supreme Being of the chariot and the cultivated fields is the judge."[4]

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1. Marshall, M.D., No. 99. Perhaps the impression of this seal was put on the walls of this king's tomb.
2. *Ibid.*, M. D., No. 393.
3. Ibid, M. D., No. 117.
4. Photo, M. D., 1929-30, No. 7993.

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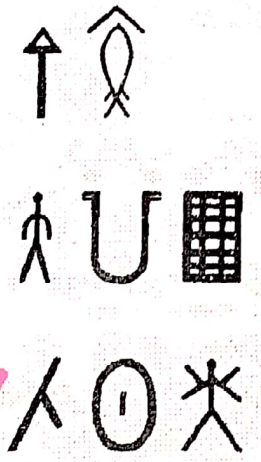
A third inscription that refers to the same subject suggests that according to those people the judgment of God lasted for a long time, very likely during the whole life time of every man, and the judgment was completed in the day of death, which is called the "day of God." In some way their idea is quite correct: for God to see is to judge and this judgment is finished with death. This inscription, shown alongside, reads[1]: *Mīnan kaṇ Āṇ-aḍu tīrpu kaḍavuḷ pagal tīrtu*, *i. e.* "the judgment of the Supreme Being seen by Mīna is completed in the day of God."



XX

VIRTUOUS LIFE, HEAVEN AND PUNISHMENT

If there was a judgment of God there must have been a moral law by which the deeds of man were judged. The inscriptions themselves reveal the fact that only those that reach a definite perfection may obtain heavenly happiness. Thus the following inscription: Which reads: *vān tēr or mīn kaṇ vāḷ*, *i. e.* "Reaching the sky one who is fish-eyed is happy".[2] There is still another similar inscription which runs as follows: "The fish-eyed one reaching the sky is happy".[4]

Now these inscriptions do not speak of Āṇ who is the Supreme fish-eyed, for Āṇ cannot reach the sky or heaven, as he is always there. Therefore the inscriptions refer to persons who have become fish-eyed, and apparently only such persons may reach the sky. The limit of perfection in order to enter heaven is therefore to be fish-eyed, and since this is a perfection of Āṇ, to be fish-eyed seems to be equivalent to the imitation of Āṇ. That to be fish-eyed was a possibility for men, a number of inscriptions speaking of persons who were fish-eyed clearly show, for instance:

1. "Four houses of the six fish-eyed ones."[5]

1. Second line from left, third line from right.
2. Marshall, M. D., Pl. CXVI, No. 25
3. *Ibid.*, M. D., No. 387.
4. *Ibid.*, M.D., No. 387.
5. *Ibid.*, H., No. 339.

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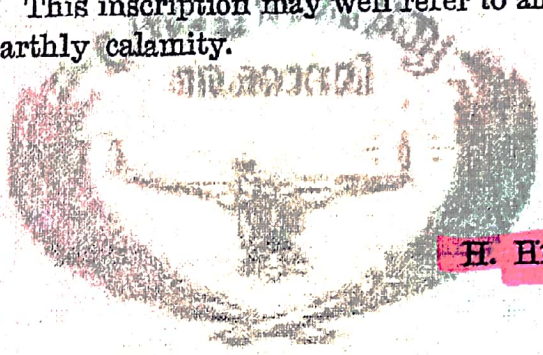
2. "Five houses of the fish-eyed prisoner."[1]
3. "The fish-eyed, one who is in the country."[2]
4. "One fish-eyed, of whom the horn-man is afraid (trembling)."[3]

The reward of a virtuous life was heaven. The phrase "reaching the sky" seems to be synonymous of "reaching heaven". From this expression it is seen how old is the idea, that heaven is somewhere above. The phrases, "reaching the sun" identified with Āṇ, or "reaching the Crab" which is one of the forms of Āṇ show that heaven is first of all the dwelling of God, and consequently to reach the sky would mean to dwell in company with Āṇ.

Where did all those who do not reach the sky go is not clear in the inscriptions. It is true that one of them speaks of "the rustling of the garment of the Supreme Being when he rises to punish"[4], but it is not clear whether this punishment is after or before death. This inscription may well refer to an earthquake or to any other earthly calamity.



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P. S.—After deciphering all the Mohenjo Daro—Harappa inscriptions now available, I may add some information to the final statement of p. 16. The son in the Proto-Indian Triad is named *Āṇil*. The corresponding sign occurs in several inscriptions.

1. *Ibid.*, M.D., No. 173.
2. *Ibid.*, H., No. 398.
3. *Ibid.*, M.D., No. 387.
4. Seal in the Louvre Museum, Paris.

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